19: Howell & Thomson E, G-5 (1943-1944) 1946
FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

123 643 Our task has not been easy. It was almost impossible—particularly during the more public events which were attended by thousands of Shilluk--to observe all the individual ritual acting which occurred, often simultaneously. The scene was set from Kwomo to Tonga—a distance of about 160 miles—and the whole tribe entered into the spirit of the occasion. Moreover, it was not seemly to interrogate the performers while the ceremonies were going on. Thus, while in many cases we observed behaviour, ritual and emotional 124 attitudes displayed by individuals or crowds, we were not able to 643 interrupt to demand an explanation from the participants. Most of the onlookers knew little more than we did, though the events had to them an accepted meaning in the context of tradition stamped on [88] their minds from birth, but only vaguely so, for Shilluk tradition rests in the minds of the elders. In a series of ceremonies, which are [614] carried out by many clans each with its peculiar duties to perform, each man knows with any degree of accuracy only the part that he must play. Subsequent interrogation was often sterile. Sometimes the Shilluk do not know, sometimes tradition exists only as such and the meaning is lost in antiquity. Interest after the event--at the time roused to a high pitch of emotional excitement--soon dies down. Answers were therefore often evasive, contradictory and even misleading.

128 643 Subsequent events, prolonged leave in England, accumulated administrative duties, etc., have made it difficult, if not impossible, to pursue our investigations. The installation of Anei Kur is three years past, and the results of our observations must be published now at the risk of criticism. We have omitted in many cases to explain fully the meaning of the varied forms of ritual, and failed to include a full description of the origin and significance of the many sacred and material objects used. At this stage of our investigations it would be misleading to speculate too deeply into those things about which our knowledge is far from complete.

643 It is not easy to draw conclusions, but certain facts are abundantly clear :-

28: Oyler M-5 (ca. 1918) 1918 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

NIKAWNG'S PLACE IN THE SHILLUK RELIGION

BY REV. D. S. OYLER.

The Shilluks being without a written language have lacked the means to collect and verify their religious beliefs. When asked as to their beliefs they refer to the old men, who have given them the traditions. Defects of memory, different sources of information, and the personal beliefs, and desires of the narrator, tend to give a diversity of belief. [73 [212] [887]

The Shilluks profess belief in a Supreme Being. He is greater than Nikawng or any other king. He is the Creator of the world, but he is far distant. They are not able to come into close contact with him, and feeling that he is far beyond their reach, and dismayed by the disasters, which come to them apparently from the hand of God, they feel the need of some one to stand between them and God. Nikawng is the chief intermediary, though others stand between them and God, either for good or evil. The distance of the Creator, and the nearness of the intercessor often tends to give him the greater power and influence. 776

They never pray to God without invoking an intercessor. A typical prayer in which Nikawng is invoked with God can be given. 776 782 539

« We praise you, you who are God. Protect us, we are in your hands, and protect us, save me. You and Nikawng you are the ones, who created, people are in your hands, and it is you Nikawng, who are accustomed to assist God to save, and it is you who give the rain. The sun is yours, and the sea (river) is yours, you who are Nikawng. You came from under the sun, you and your father, you two saved the earth, and your son Dok, you subdued all the peoples. The cow (for sacrifice) is here for you, and the blood will go to God and you. Now hear all of you, you the people of the earth, and save us. The person who rejects your talk will die. »

This veneration of Nikawng may possibly be a bit of ancestor worship, 776 769 782